

**The Revelation, Re-Affirmation, and Re-Invention of Self Through the “Discovery,”  
Consumption, and Experiencing of Others: Globalization and Interactions in  
Senegambian Tourism Formations**

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**1. The Influence of Exotic Stereotypes on the Enrollment in a Study Abroad Program in West Africa: Globalization and the Emergence of “Academic Tourism” in U.S. Contemporary Higher Education Curricula**

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**2. “What is Africa to Me?” Now: The Impact of Heritage/Roots Tourism or “Homecoming” on African Americans’ Conceptions of Africa**

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**3. The *Tourismification* and Invention of Sites of Memory: The Slavery Museum of Juffureh Village, the Guided Tour of James Island, and the 2010 Roots Festival in The Gambia**

Harriet Marin Jones  
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**4. “How Stella Got Her Groove Back”: Reflections on African American Female Participation in Senegambian Sex Tourism**

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**5. When Bintu Meets Françoise: Homosexual and Homosocial Interactions in Senegambian Sex Tourism**

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**6. What do the *Toubabs* Want?: Conversations with *Antiquaires*, “Businessmen,” “Bumsters,” and Other Young Male and Female Senegambians about Sex Tourism in Senegal and The Gambia**

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## **7. Intimate Faces of Gambian Tourism: Hustlers, Beachboys, or “Bumsters” at Kololi Beach**

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### **The Revelation, Re-Affirmation, and Re-Invention of Self Through the “Discovery,” Consumption, and Experiencing of Others: Globalization and Interactions in Senegambian Tourism Formations**

A panel organized by Jean Muteba Rahier, Florida International University  
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This panel presents explorations of academic tourism, heritage or roots tourism, and sex tourism as globalized tourism formations in the Senegambian region of West Africa.

The papers are the product of field research conducted by United States-based graduate students, under the supervision of the panel organizer, during the unfolding of what could be called the “academic tourism” that took place in the summer of 2010 over the five weeks period of a study abroad program in Miami, Florida, and in Senegal and The Gambia. The focus of the program was on “traditions, globalization, and tourism in West Africa.” Our principal objectives were to disentangle the processes at work among the various social actors and big and small stakeholders involved in “heritage tourism” (also called “roots tourism”) at Gorée Island in Senegal, and at Juffureh village and James Island in The Gambia, as well as to examine the informal commerce of sexual-economic and affective transactions that often take place between older (mostly white) European and American male and female tourists and young Senegalese and Gambian women and men in *La Petite Côte* in Senegal, and in Kololi beach in The Gambia.

The expression *globalized tourism formation* refers to the sociohistorical processes that create specific spaces of encounter on the “global stage,” where seductions of difference and desires for it meet or collide, and by which social categories are created, inhabited, transformed, inverted, and sometimes destroyed and reinvented. These categories are informed by geographic, racial, sexual, and gender dichotomies that oppose powerful to subaltern, global south to global north, black to white, African to Euro American and also African American, young to old, male to female, rich to poor,

etc. We understand tourism formations as processes that always involve “exotic” seductions and desires for the “un-familiar,” which result from a linkage between structure and representation, where specific tourism *projects* ideologically work to make these links. A specific tourism project is at the same time an interpretation, a representation, and an explanation of social dynamics that combine to bring in, and to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular socio-economic and racial lines.

All papers presented in this panel are grounded on ethnographic reflective participant-observation and on a series of systematic formal and informal interviews.

### **The Influence of Exotic Stereotypes on the Enrollment in a Study Abroad Program in West Africa: Globalization and the Emergence of “Academic Tourism” in U.S. Contemporary Higher Education Curricula**

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One of the consequences globalization has had on higher education curricula in the United States has been to make highly valuable students’ acquisition of knowledge about various regions of the world. This is more so the case, perhaps, in certain disciplines and fields of inquiry such as anthropology, international relations, and African diaspora studies, than in others. In most American universities, the Office of Education Abroad has now become a very busy place, where mostly summer programs in a variety of continents and countries are managed.

The core of this paper goes right to the conference theme of tourism and the seduction of difference by presenting the analysis of diaries that all 12 students (7 undergraduate and 5 graduate) who participated in a study abroad program in Senegal and The Gambia during the summer of 2010 have written right before the beginning, during, and right after the five weeks of its duration, with very frequent entries. I was the director of that study abroad program. The students received points for turning in a detailed diary after they had been assured that their privacy would be safeguarded. Before the beginning of the program, they were asked to answer a number of questions about their previous relationship with, and knowledge about continental Africa.

The investigation shows how much stereotypes of Africa have worked to titillate the interest of students to the point of having them enroll. Others have one or other diasporic connection to Africa, and came with a different disposition. The analysis then progresses to their sometimes emotional reporting about their experiences during our stay in both countries. It eventually ends with a reading of their last entries and with a consideration of the intellectual trajectory the five-week program entailed.

### **“What is Africa to Me?” Now: The Impact of Heritage/Roots Tourism or “Homecoming” on African Americans’ Conceptions of Africa**

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Most theorizings of “Diaspora” emphasize that members of a diasporic community are defined by their retention and sharing of a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland—its physical location, its history, and its achievements. They assert that members of a diasporic community believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return—when conditions are appropriate; and that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity.

This paper presents the results of extensive interviews of African Americans who engaged in roots or heritage tourism in Senegal and/or The Gambia, and who have visited either or both the *Maison des Esclaves* in Gorée Island and/or Juffureh Village, the Alberda slavery museum and Fort Saint James in The Gambia. Interviews collected African American tourists’ reactions about their visits of these sites of memory and the impact that these visits have had on their conceptions of Africa and Africans. The research reveals that they come out of this experience emotionally transformed and with an altered sense of self, either with a reinforced sentiment to belong to the “Continent” or “Homeland,” or on the contrary with a strong feeling of being “American” before anything else. Some prefer the ambiguity of an unfinished combination of these two positions.

**The *Tourismification* and Invention of Sites of Memory: The Slavery Museum of Juffureh Village, the Guided Tour of James Island, and the 2010 Roots Festival in The Gambia**

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The publication and sale success of the historical fiction *Roots* by Alex Haley in the 1970s, which also inspired a television series by the same name which had a profound impact on post-civil rights era American society by forcing it to re-examine its history of race relations and the founding role played by slavery, is one of the major factors behind the development of heritage or “roots tourism” in The Gambia. Roots tourism mostly aims to attract the growing African American middle class, which became an important spending group in an expanding global tourism industry.

In the 1980s, the Gambian government adopted a series of measures in the objective of developing sites of memory of the slave trade to compete with the emergence of other similar sites in West Africa—mostly in Senegal, Ghana, and Benin.

This paper makes an ethnographic analysis of the processes of tourismification and invention of sites of memory of the slave trade in The Gambia by re-examining the

creation of the slavery museum in Alberda (Juffureh village), by engaging in a critical reading of the guided tour of Fort Saint James on James island in the River Gambia, and by deconstructing the main performances of the 2010 Roots Festival, formerly known as the “Homecoming Festival,” which was first organized in 1996. The research uncovers the attempts by various Gambian stakeholders to meet what they interpret as being African American tourists’ expectations and interest for the slave trade and for the discovery of an “authentic Africa.”

### **“How Stella Got Her Groove Back”: Reflections on African American Female Participation in Senegambian Sex Tourism**

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Social sciences research on international tourism has shown how relatively important post-civil rights era-middle class U.S. African American partaking has been in tourist visits to the global south. This has particularly been the case in the last 15 years, with the Caribbean, Brazil, Egypt and locations in Sub-Saharan Africa being among their most coveted destinations.

Many of these tourist visits are enthused by a desire to discover and learn about one’s own “heritage.” They are as much about a preoccupation to unhearth, as it were, one’s own “true” self by reconnecting with ancestral lands as they are about the discovery of Others—continental Africans—and their traditions. This is the foundation of “heritage tourism.” In some circumstances, heritage tourism can lead to “sex tourism,” in a logic set by the desire to be enchanted, wherein informal sexual, economic and emotional encounters can give the African American tourist the illusion of an authentic connection with local Africans, while the African companion—eventually aware of her desire for authentic difference—mostly sees an opportunity for material improvement and possibly a subsequent successful international migration.

This paper discusses African American women who travel to the Senegambian region and participate in sex tourism with both or either male and/or female Senegambians. I show how heritage or “roots” tourism can mask sexual encounters to the public gaze as nascent friendships, particularly in the case of Lesbian interactions.

Through detailed descriptions, which are the result of extensive interviews, I uncover how these sexual encounters ultimately reproduce—above and beyond the narratives of transnational “racial solidarity”—the power dynamics that usually provide the foundation or the ground for meetings between powerful and subaltern, global north and global south, Euro-America and Africa, rich and poor in global tourist encounters.

### **When Bintu Meets Françoise: Homosexual and Homosocial Interactions in Senegambian Sex Tourism**

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Tourism studies scholars who have worked on the formation called “sex tourism” agree to differentiate between outward prostitution or sex work, which can be contracted by tourists for the duration of one sexual encounter, the sale of sex for money, and the kind of interactions also quite characteristic of sex tourism that eventually involves sex but also a number of other sentiments and emotions, in interactions that unfold over a comparatively longer period of time.

The growing literature on sex tourism in the Senegambian region has dealt with either encounters between younger Senegambian men and usually (much) older European and American women or between younger Senegambian women and usually (much) older European and American men. This paper attempts to add to the existing literature by uncovering the homosexual and homosocial relationships that developed between European and American women and Senegambian women in *La Petite Côte* in Senegal and in Kololi Beach in The Gambia during a field trip in May-June 2010.

Thanks to participant-observation in sites of encounter and to a number of interviews, I explore the specific position of female homosexuality and homosociality within the Senegalese and Gambian heteronormative social order, and discuss, among other things, the different strategies adopted by European and African women to remain hidden from the public gaze, the expectations that both sides bring to the encounter, the idiosyncratic particularities of relationships, the eventual disillusion that follows when they end, and the role played by race and one’s place of residence in the various stories collected.

**What do the *Toubabs* Want?: Conversations with *Antiquaires*, “Businessmen,” “Bumsters,” and Other Young Male and Female Senegambians about Sex Tourism in Senegal and The Gambia**

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Scholarly literature about sex tourism in the Senegambian region has developed over the years. Most of this literature is based on research conducted by foreign scholars who have rarely fully captured the perspectives of the young Senegalese and Gambian women and men who engage in the often informal economico-sexual and affective exchanges with *toubabs* (whites) that take place over a more or less extended period of time.

The visibility of these exchanges for the public gaze became such that it has attracted the attention of local politicians and of the population at large. No one who has been in contact with the areas frequented by tourists in Dakar and *La Petite Côte* in Senegal, and in Banjul and around Kololi Beach in The Gambia, is unaware of the phenomenon. Senegalese and Gambian adult men and women usually criticize the public

display of affection between older white men who wander around, sometimes hand in hand, with young and pretty Senegambian women, or between the older white women and their escorts: young Senegambian men who look like athletes in their swim suits, and who often wear dread locks.

This paper aims to add to the existing literature by focusing exclusively on young Senegambians' perspectives on sex tourism. It is based on long informal interviews during which young Senegambians shared their experiences, they discussed the way they navigate the antagonism between the traditional values that regiment proper sexual and heterosocial behaviors and what they do with the toubabs, the conflicts they had with them, their eventual emotional and affective investment in these relationships, their disillusionments, their dreams, the commodification of their bodies, the other activities they also pursue to make money, and their views on the inequalities in the tourism industry and in the world at large.

### **Intimate Faces of Gambian Tourism: Hustlers, Beachboys, or “Bumsters” at Kololi Beach**

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There is a consensus in The Gambia to consider that in the present situation, any durable economic development must involve the development of the tourism industry.

Hustlers, beachboys, or “bumsters” as they are also somewhat pejoratively called, are part of the informal sector of the tourism industry. Most of them do not possess any of the now required licenses to interact with tourists. Government agencies usually look at them as a nuisance and try to limit their numbers. Yet, for many tourists, they are probably the Gambians with whom they have the closest of contacts: they are a permanent feature of Gambian tourism. Left out by the formal sector in which they can't find a job, they are on a constant search for opportunities to make some money by providing a variety of services to European and American tourists, including the eventual sale of marijuana and sometimes other drugs. They are known to perform hetero or homo sexual activities that go from outright prostitution or sex work involving payment to not obviously commercial sexual interactions within the framework of a longer term “relationship” for the duration of the visit of a particular tourist. They usually remain in a specific section of the beach, where they end up knowing everyone, including the tourists.

This paper presents the results of an ethnographic research that involved long period of participant-observation and a series of informal and formal interviews with a group of “bumsters” at Kololi Beach in June 2010. It addresses the life stories of four individuals who have managed to survive on the margins of the industry despite following the adoption of a number of ingenious strategies.